



Family Liaison Office

Direct Communication Project

Resource No. 36

Special Needs Resource Information

The information below on resources for Foreign Service employee parents of children with special educational needs was originally transmitted to all posts on February 25, 2000 (State 034356) from Assistant Secretary Patrick F. Kennedy. Phone numbers and staff names have been updated as of September 2000.

The Bureau of Administration wishes to remind parents of children with special education needs of resources available to them. We hope that advance information on special educational assets in schools available at overseas posts and on private resources available in various locales will help employees and parents choose posts to bid on that will meet the needs of all family members. Because several offices at State are involved in coordinating and providing special education needs services, we hope that this cable will be useful to parents in sorting out the bureaucracy. Behind that bureaucracy and the acronyms that identify the offices, are individuals with the knowledge, background, and desire to assist.

There is also information in this cable that may be helpful to all parents of school-age children, such as points of contact in the Office of Overseas Schools, M/FLO, Allowances, and

intranet and internet web sites.

Therefore, we ask that the cable be shared with all parents of school-age children at post.

Non-State personnel should always consult with their own agency on procedures and on the special education allowance described below, as each agency must fund allowances for its own employees, and other agencies may adopt regulations that are more restrictive than the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR).

Four offices in the State Department have resources that can be useful to all parents, but especially parents of children with special needs. They are A/OPR/ALS (Office of Allowances), A/OPR/OS (Overseas Schools), M/DGHR/MED/ECS (Employee Consultation Service or ECS), and M/DGHR/FLO (The Family Liaison Office or FLO). Their role in the process are described below.

A/OPR/ALS -- SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION ALLOWANCE

Regulations on the education allowance benefits available for a special needs child can be found in the Department of State Standardized Regulations Section [276.8](#).

In order to apply and qualify for the allowance, Employee Consultation Service must agree that the child meets the special needs definition. More information on ECS is contained in a separate section of this cable. Benefits are available for children meeting the requirements from birth through the school year in which the child turns 21 years of age if still in secondary school. The child must have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), or an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) if the child is under three, or equivalent prepared by a medical or education professional. Parents are strongly encouraged to get regular ECS review and concurrence on the IEP. If any disputes about allowable expenses are brought to the Office of Allowances, ECS always reviews the IEP and concurs with the Office of Allowances interpretations.

The special education allowance can be used only to fund services specified in the child's IEP or IFSP or equivalent prepared by a medical or educational professional. All types of expenses normally funded under the education allowance are allowable. These include school tuition and transportation and, if attending a school away from post, room and board and transportation between school and post. (ECS concurrence is required in order to receive the away from post allowance rate.) In addition, when specifically required in the IEP, the following are allowable:

- A. Periodic diagnostic testing required by a school or medical authority
- B. Rental of specialized equipment not available at the school
- C. Summer School
- D. Individual tutoring if not available at the school
- E. Occasionally, software, tapes, or CD-ROMS directly related to course work which have no broader application.

The maximum annual amounts, which may be reimbursed under the education allowance, are spelled out in [DSSR 274.12.c](#), [276.8](#), and [276.81](#). These maximums are revised periodically. As of February 1, 2000 they are as follows:

- A. For children at post: \$26,800 plus \$3,000 for supplementary instruction (see below).
- B. For children attending a school away from post \$55,350.

If allowable expenses exceed the above maximums in exceptional circumstances, [DSSR 276.81](#) provides for after-the-fact reimbursement of up to 50% more than the standard maximums. Such reimbursements must be fully justified and cannot be reimbursed to or paid on behalf of the employee until they have actually been incurred.

Please note that supplementary instruction costs of up to \$3,000 annually may be reimbursed for any child (not just a special needs child) attending a school at post. However, costs must strictly fall under one of the three criteria specified in [DSSR 276.9](#). Generally, only one criterion applies to children having difficulty with a standard school curriculum, specifically, that the child requires additional instruction (tutoring) to enable him/her to enter a grade or remain in the same grade.

If you have any questions on the education allowance, please feel free to contact Betty A. Stewart, Regulations Interpretation Specialist for A/OPR/ALS by unclassified e-mail, by internet e-mail at STEWARTBA@STATE.GOV or by telephone at 202-663-1121. You may also wish to contact Audrey Thurman, Team Leader for Education Allowance, by unclassified e-mail, by internet e-mail at THURMANAE@STATE.GOV, or by telephone at the above number.

The DSSR and other information on the Office of Allowances is available on the Department of State OpenNet (intranet) web site at [Bureau of Administration/Office of Operations/Office of Allowances](#) or <http://aoprals.a.state.gov/> and on the internet at http://WWW.STATE.GOV/WWW/PERDIEMS/ALLOWANCES_INDEX.HTML.

A/OPR/OS – OFFICE OF OVERSEAS SCHOOLS

The Office of Overseas Schools provides information to all USG parents on educational services available overseas for school-age children, including children with special needs. A/OPR/OS also encourages overseas schools to make available educational services for these children. A/OPR/OS supports the following programs aimed at special needs children:

Advisory Committee on Exceptional Children and Youth (ACECY):

-- The Advisory Committee on Exceptional Children and Youth, headed by Dr. Lea Ybarra of The Johns Hopkins University, advises A/OPR/OS on the needs of highly capable and learning disabled students in Department-assisted overseas schools. Since the inception of this project, which is now in its twelfth year, the Committee's efforts have focused on encouraging and assisting A/OPR/OS to develop educational programs for elementary and secondary students who have academic and developmental needs. The training of teachers in schools assisted by A/OPR/OS continues to be a prime objective of this project. A weeklong training program, the Optimal Match Network Institute (OMNI), is held at The Johns Hopkins University campus each summer. The program attracts teachers, diagnosticians, school psychologists and administrators from overseas schools from around the world. Additional training sessions have been held in South America, Africa, Europe and East Asia. These conference-type programs help teachers to further their technical skills and stimulate schools in conducting programs for special needs students.

Summary School Information Project (SSI):

-- The Summary School Information project (SSI) elicits detailed information from all posts regarding the schools worldwide attended by U.S. government employee family members. These reports include information about special programs and service available in these schools. A/OPR/OS compiles this information annually in a publication (with accompanying CD-ROM) entitled **OVERSEAS SCHOOLS ATTENDED BY U.S. GOVERNMENT DEPENDENT CHILDREN: A USERS GUIDE AND INDEX TO THE CD-ROM**. This material contains information on about 650 schools (47 offer boarding facilities) and pre-schools. A/OPR/OS provides a copy to each embassy and consulate to enable USG employees to review the material as they participate in the bidding process. Your post CLO, Admin Office, or Personnel Officer should have a copy of the CD-ROM for you to view. At the State Department, copies of the CD-ROM are available at the Office of Overseas Schools, the Employee Service Center (formerly the Foreign Service Lounge), the Family Liaison Office, the Overseas Briefing Center, and the Post Management Offices of each regional geographic bureau. The Personnel offices of USAID and other agencies and Departments that assign USG employees overseas also have copies. A/OPR/OS continues to receive many positive comments from parents with children requiring special service who have found this information helpful as they consider overseas assignment possibilities.

Materials for Parents of Children with Special Needs:

-- A/OPR/OS also publishes an annual report entitled **OVERSEAS SCHOOLS OFFERING SUPPORT TO CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS** which is derived from the Summary School Information forms. The special needs programs described include those for the highly capable children as well as for children with other exceptional educational needs, such as the learning disabilities. This report, which is sent to all overseas posts and is also available upon request to A/OPR/OS, advised parents that the information is self-reported, may change from year-to-year, and is by no means conclusive or all-inclusive. It should be used only as a starting point in the search for possible programs for children with special needs.

Library:

--A/OPR/OS maintains a small library of materials such as curriculum guides, yearbooks, newsletters, and school profiles organized by country, city, and school for easy reference. Many of these materials contain information on the special needs programs of particular schools. There is also a collection of videotapes showing overseas school campuses, programs, and special activities. For parents considering "AWAY FROM POST" education options, various handbooks and other information on private overseas boarding schools are available in the A/OPR/OS library. Visitors are welcome either by appointment or on a walk-in basis. A resource person is available to provide assistance.

A/OPR/OS maintains an internet web site providing information regarding American-assisted overseas schools and other valuable education information. The web site address is

WWW.STATE.GOV/WWW.ABOUT_STATE/SCHOOLS. A/OPR/OS also maintains an intranet site on the State OpenNet system located at: [HTTP://AOPROS.A.STATE.GOV](http://AOPROS.A.STATE.GOV).

In addition, parents of school-aged children may find valuable resources and information at various non-Department of State internet web sites. One is WWW.FAMILYEDUCATION.COM. This web site is dedicated to the parent community and includes information about special needs. It also sponsors message boards that enable parents to connect with other parents. Another useful web site is found at WWW.CURRY.EDSCHOOL.VIRGINIA.EDU/GO/SPECIALED/RESOURCES/SPECIALISTS.HTML. This web site provides e-mail discussion lists on special education disabilities. And finally, a third web site that may prove useful is located at WWW.NPND.ORG. This is the web site of the National Parent Network on Disabilities, and provides useful information and listservs for parents to share ideas and experiences.

A/OPR/OS Contacts:

--USG employee parents of dependent children considering overseas assignments are encouraged to contact the Office of Overseas Schools at any time to seek information and advice as they try to match their professional options with the needs of their school-age children when considering overseas assignments.

The Director

Dr. Keith D. Miller, available by State unclassified e-mail, by telephone at 202-261-8200, and by internet e-mail at MILLERKD2@STATE.GOV.

East Asia and Canada

The A/OPR/OS contact for East Asia and Canada is Dr. Beatrice Cameron. She can be reached by unclassified e-mail, by telephone at 202-261-8211, and by internet e-mail at CAMERONBH2@STATE.GOV.

Africa

The A/OPR/OS contact for Africa is Dr. Joseph P. Carney. He can be reached at 202-261-8216, by unclassified e-mail, and by internet e-mail at CARNEYJP2@STATE.GOV.

Central America, Colombia, the Caribbean, and Mexico

The A/OPR/OS contact for Central America, Colombia, the Caribbean, and Mexico is Marsha A. McDonough. She can be reached by unclassified e-mail, by telephone at 202-261-8219, and by internet e-mail at MCDONOUGH@STATE.GOV.

Near East and South Asia, Egypt, Greece, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia, and Turkey

The A/OPR/OS contact for Near East and South Asia, Egypt, Greece, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia, and Turkey is Dr. John Davis. He can be reached by unclassified e-mail, by telephone at 202-261-8216, and by internet e-mail at DAVISJC@STATE.GOV.

South America

The A/OPR/OS contact for South America is Dr. William H. Scotti. Dr. Scotti can be reached by telephone at 202-261-8219, by unclassified e-mail, and by internet e-mail at SCOTTIWH2@STATE.GOV.

Western and Eastern Europe, and the Newly Independent States

The A/OPR/OS contact for Western and Eastern Europe, and the Newly Independent States is Dr. Robert R. Spillane. He can be reached by telephone at 202-261-8211, by unclassified e-mail, and by internet e-mail at SPILLANERR2@STATE.GOV.

Resource Center

The A/OPR/OS Resource Center Manager is Ms. Carol T. Sutherland. She can be reached via unclassified e-mail, by telephone at 202-261-8223, or by internet e-mail at SUTHERLANDCT@STATE.GOV.

M/DGHR/MED/ECS – EMPLOYEE CONSULTATION SERVICE

Employee Consultation Service is located in the Office of Medical Services. The staff is comprised of three professional social workers, who offer consultation and support to families with children with special educational needs. As all parents of children with special education needs know, each child's situation is unique. We therefore recommend that a good first point of contact in the process of obtaining the assistance your child needs, is Anne Weiss in M/DGHR/MED/ECS – Employee Counseling Services. She can assist you in determining exactly what assistance your child will require.

The ECS staff assists families in arranging evaluations of children who are identified by parents or school personnel as showing delays in development, such as speech delays or motor coordination problems, learning difficulties, or emotional problems. These evaluations may include psychological, educational, speech/language, occupational therapy, and psychiatric assessments.

If a child is due for a medical clearance examination, the evaluations can be authorized by MED/ECS as part of the clearance process and M/DGHR/MED will cover the evaluation costs not covered by the employee's health insurance. If problems are identified while the family is abroad, the special needs education allowance discussed above can cover the diagnostic testing and the travel of a child and one parent to a diagnostic testing site in the United States or abroad. Testing cannot be authorized by M/DGHR/MED/ECS if a family resides in the U.S. and the child is not due for a clearance examination, or if the family is in the U.S. on reassignment after a foreign tour, since U.S. public schools are mandated to provide evaluations of children with special educational needs.

Evaluation reports become part of a child's medical record and are reviewed for medical clearance determinations. M/DGHR/MED will clear children for posts where their special educational needs can be met.

Employee Counseling Service advises parents to consult with the Office of Overseas Schools to determine which schools can meet their child's needs. If adequate schools are not available abroad and parents want to consider boarding school placement, the ECS staff will help locate an appropriate boarding school or residential treatment program.

Employee Consultation Service assists A/OPR/ALS in the determination of eligibility for the special needs education allowance based on diagnostic evaluations and school reports.

Employee Consultation Service will send confirmation of eligibility for the special education allowance to post via MED CHANNEL cable to the Health Unit and the employee parent, with a copy to the Regional Psychiatrist (RMO/P).

The point of contact in M/DGHR/MED/ECS for special educational needs and issues is Ms. Anne Weiss. Ms. Weiss can be reached by telephone at 202-663-1815, by unclassified e-mail, or by internet e-mail at WEISSAE@STATE.GOV.

M/DGHR/FLO - FAMILY LIAISON OFFICE

M/DGHR/FLO serves USG employees and their family members assigned to, serving at, or returning from a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad. FLOs mission is to improve quality of life by identifying issues and advocating for programs and solutions, providing a variety of client services, and extending services to our overseas communities by managing the worldwide Community Liaison Office (CLO) program.

CLO coordinators are responsible for informing families of availability of schooling at their post from nursery school age to college, for the range of abilities from gifted to disabled. They collect information about their post for Washington offices (The Office of Overseas Schools, Overseas Briefing Center, and FLO). Frequently the CLO is the first point of contact for a family with special needs concerns.

FLO can also assist parents of children with special education needs in contacting another government employee parent with direct experience with a particular school in a specific location. Parents may contact FLO for the name of the CLO at a specific post. That CLO may then be able to provide the name of a parent with knowledge of the school and private resources at that post.

FLO Education and Youth Officer Marjorie Bigelow can provide this link with overseas CLOs. She also gives information and counsel to families and Community Liaison Office Coordinators on special education issues, and refers them to Employee Consultation Services, Allowances, and Office of Overseas Schools as appropriate. She also assists employees and their families with general education options at posts overseas, U.S. and overseas boarding schools, Washington area public and private schools, correspondence courses, the college admissions process, financial aid, standardized educational testing, and summer programs. She can be contacted via unclassified e-mail, by telephone at 202-647-1076, or by internet e-mail at BIGELOWMN@STATE.GOV.

We hope that this information proves useful. Please feel free to contact any of the offices

or individuals listed for information.